Chriſt's Commiſſion to Peter, and the reſt of the Apoſtles, in giving them the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, no Commiſſion for the Pope of Rome.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT *TRINITY CHAPEL,*

WINDMILL-STREET,

FINSBURY-SQUARE,

On the LORD's Day Evening, *October* 12, 1794.

By J. WILSON,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

Verily I ſay unto you, Whatſoever ye ſhall bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven. JESUS CHRIST.

If any Man teach otherwiſe, and conſent not to wholeſome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jeſus, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godlineſs, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Queſtions and Strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmiſings, perverſe Diſputings of Men of corrupt Minds, and deſtitute of the Truth, ſuppoſing that Gain is Godlineſs; from ſuch withdraw thyſelf. PAUL.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Subſcribers.

LONDON:

Printed and Sold by J. CHALMERS, No. 81, *Old-Street.*

Sold alſo by M. PRIESTLEY, (late TRAPP) No. 1, *Paternoſter-Row*; J. MURGATROYD, No. 73, *Chiſwell-Street*; J. PHILLIPS, No. 27, *City-Road*; J. SPRING, *Glamford-Briggs, Lincolnſhire*; and at the Veſtry of the Chapel.

MDCCXCIV.

[PRICE SIXPENCE.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

CHRIST's COMMISSION,

&c. &c. &c.

MATTHEW xvi. 19.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven.

THESE words were ſpoken by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Head of the church, to Peter, one of his apoſtles; as may be ſeen by a queſtion he propoſed to his diſciples in the 13th verſe, when he came into the coaſts of Cæſarea Phillippi, aſking them what men ſaid of him; not that he did not know what men ſaid of him, but he was deſirous to hear the opinion men had of him from his diſciples; and it ſeems the reaſon was, that he might take an opportunity of bringing them to acknowledge their opinion of him. Ver. 14. And they ſaid, Some ſay thou art John the Baptiſt, riſen from the dead; ſome Elias, as prophecied by Malachi, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. And though thoſe men, who gave the above opinion, were not ſuch implacable enemies as the Scribes and Phariſees, as they ranked him among the prophets; yet they came very ſhort of the true knowledge of him; they did not know him to be a Divine Perſon, nor he whom Mo-

ſes had ſpoken of *; *(The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto thee a Prophet from the midſt of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye ſhall hearken)* nor did they know that he was the Meſſiah ſo much ſpoken of in prophecy, and ſo long expected, though all the titles and characters were borne by him. Ver. 15. *He ſaith unto them, But whom ſay ye that I am?* Without animadverting upon the different ſentiments others had entertained, he now aſks their opinion of him: this he ſaid, that they might have an opportunity of giving a reaſon of their hope in him. Ver. 16. *And Simon Peter anſwered and ſaid, Thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* He either ſpoke of his own accord, and for himſelf, being a zealous man, and one that dearly loved Chriſt, truly believed in him, and was ready to make a confeſſion of him: or, as the mouth of the reſt, in their name, and with their conſent; or, at leaſt, as full well knowing the ſentiments of their minds: *Thou art Chriſt, the Son of the living God:* it is ſhort, but full: a character that includes all his offices, of Prophet, Prieſt, and King; and every other character, which repreſents him as a Saviour to the uttermoſt. Verſe 17. *And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto him, Bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona, for fleſh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.* This very paſſage ſtands to overthrow the popular doctrine of the preſent day, *i. e.* the natural power of man ſufficient to do the will of God in an acceptable way and manner: beſides, ſpiritual life and ſervices are deemed enthuſiaſm by natural men; and every thing ſupernatural is accounted fooliſhneſs; as is

* Deut. xviii. 15.

clearly

clearly ſeen by the Apoſtle Paul's words *, *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them. for they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* And it is but a poor ſhift that ſome have fled to, when they have ſaid, that theſe words are only applicable to the vitiated and abandoned part of mankind, but cannot refer to the moral man. Human nature, my friends, is corrupt; and the whole of human nature, as coming from a corrupt ſtock, muſt be alike corrupt; and whether moulded into kings, or nobles, or meaner men, the carnal mind is enmity againſt God; not ſubject to his law, neither indeed can be. And as we ſee the out-breakings of ſin, in all ranks and orders of men amongſt us, what is to ſtop the torrent? Will dry lectures on morality, which treat on the dignity of human nature, moral fitneſs, the innate beauty of virtue, &c. alas! theſe always have been found feeble weapons againſt the working of ſin; and is the teaching of fleſh and blood, which cannot reveal Jeſus Chriſt to a ſinner: for though the ſpirit of a man may know the things of a man, yet none knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God; and the Father, which is in heaven, giveth the Spirit unto his people, that they may know the things that are freely given to them of God.

Verſe 18. *And I ſay unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* Intimating, that he was rightly called Peter, or Cephas, which ſignifies a ſtone, and was laid upon the ſure foundation, and

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

built

built on the rock Chriſt; and he was very fit to be laid in the ſpiritual building. By the which is meant the elect of God; the general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in heaven: theſe ſtones, by nature, are no better than others; originally lie in the ſame pit; but they are ſingled out, and ſeparated, according to the ſovereign will of God, and are fitted and prepared, and made living ſtones by the Spirit of God, through a preached goſpel, and are built up a ſpiritual houſe; and each one, in their ſeveral places and deſtinations, are knit together, grow up as an holy temple of the Lord: and Chriſt calls them his church, being the gift of his Father *, and the purchaſe of his own blood †. This church he builds himſelf: and by the rock on which he builds his church, is meant not Peter; for had this been the caſe, what had become of the church, when Peter denied his Lord? But the rock is Jeſus Chriſt, which God the Father has laid in Zion ‡: *Therefore, thus ſaith the Lord, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner ſtone, a ſure foundation:* and Paul tells us, in Epheſ. ii. 20, 21. 23. that all the houſehold of God is built upon the ſame foundation with the apoſtles and prophets, Jeſus Chriſt himſelf; *in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom you alſo are builded together, for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.*

And after all, what is this to the pope of Rome, who is no ſucceſſor of Peter? for Peter never was

* John vi. 37. † Acts xx. 28. ‡ Iſaiah xxviii. 16.

biſhop

biſhop of Rome; nor has the pope of Rome either his office or doctrine: Chriſt is the rock of ages, in whom is everlaſting ſtrength; and is the ſure, firm, and everlaſting foundation on which all true believers are laid: he is the foundation of their faith and hope, and everlaſting happineſs, and will ever continue; and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it; neither death, nor the grave, nor all the powers of darkneſs; for they are ranſomed from the power of the grave, and redeemed from death: and he that has done this great and glorious work, is none other than the God of ſalvation; and to God the Lord belong the iſſues from death *. Hear how lovingly he ſpeaks to his drooping members below; *Fear not, I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and I have the keys of hell and death.* Now, what a liar the pope is! for he ſays, and wiſhes us to believe, that he has this bunch of keys hanging at his girdle; but, brethren, Chriſt has them ſecure; and he ſays to his church, *Becauſe I live, you ſhall live alſo*; nor will he ever give them to that man of ſin, that ſon of perdition.

And I give unto thee [Peter] *the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatſoever*, &c.

In diſcourſing from theſe words, I ſhall, in the firſt place, conſider the perſon addreſſed.

Secondly, What we are to underſtand here by the *kingdom of heaven.*

Thirdly, What is meant by the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven.

Fourthly, What is underſtood by *binding* and *looſing*.

* Pſalm lxviii. 20.

Firſt,

First, We are to consider the person addressed; was Peter by name, as is evinced from the former verses of the chapter; he was one chosen of the Father in Jesus Christ; not because he was holy and without blame, as his own conduct fully testifies: but he was chosen (as unholy and blamable, that he might be made holy and without blame before him in love), and that before the foundation of the world: he was a fellow-member of that Head, with those he addresses his epistle to, and stiles elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; and the way and manner the elect are made holy and without blame, is through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: and there is not any other thing subdues the carnal mind, and brings the elect to obedience, but the influential power of the Holy Ghost. And as he was chosen of God, so he was redeemed by Christ; and one of those who were redeemed from among men: his sins laid on Christ, and he bore them in his own body on the tree; and being laid there, Christ redeemed him from the curse of the law; justice was satisfied, and the actual transgressor fully acquitted: and, as a late Divine observes, "Happy, thrice happy they, who come unto God "by him, whose iniquity is pardoned, whose transgression is forgiven; riches and honours, thrones, "crowns and sceptres, cannot greatly add to their "bliss; pain and poverty, ignominy and reproach, "cannot greatly diminish their happiness. It is true, "O ye favourites of heaven, the fact of sin cannot "be taken away, the desert of sin cannot be removed; "yea,

" yea, even its power and dominion, ſhall not be to-
" tally deſtroyed, in your preſent ſtate of imperfec-
" tion: however, there is no condemnation to them
" that are in Chriſt Jeſus. No condemnation for
" your inherent corruption, none for your actual
" tranſgreſſions; none for your paſt, none for your
" future provocations. Chaſtiſed you may be, with
" the rod of a father, but not with the wounds of
" an enemy." *It is God that juſtifieth, who is he that condemneth?* though men ſhould condemn you, God will not; though devils accuſe you, they ſhall not prevail. *No weapon that is formed againſt thee ſhall proſper, and every tongue that riſeth in judgment againſt thee, thou ſhalt condemn. This is the heritage of the ſervants of the Lord: and their righteouſneſs is of me, ſaith the Lord.* Peter was one of thoſe whom Chriſt gave himſelf for, to redeem him from all his iniquities: and the price was not any corruptible thing, as ſilver or gold; but the precious blood of Chriſt: and while the prophane turns this grace of God into wantonneſs, may the Lord bring poor ſenſible ſinners to drink a refreſhing draught of theſe wells of ſalvation. *God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them.* And as Peter was redeemed by Chriſt, ſo he was called by grace; for being ſaved, he was called: mark, my brethren, it was with an holy calling; I know the enemies to the doctrines of grace will ſay, If theſe things are true, we may go on juſt as we like; we may live in ſin, and do as we pleaſe: it is plain, whatever profeſſion ſuch may make of being religious, their language teſtifies them to be only natural men;

and if, for a ſhew of religion, they lay ſome reſtraints upon themſelves, yet ſinning is their delight and pleaſure; and if they exerciſe their judgments upon the goſpel, yet as they cannot diſcern the ſublime truths therein, they brand them with horrible, and call them fooliſhneſs: can a true and juſt verdict come from ſuch a judgment?

But to return: They are called with an holy calling; and not according to their works, but according to God's purpoſe; called to the knowledge of themſelves as loſt ſinners, to the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt as their Saviour, as the foundation of all their hope, and the fountain of all their bleſſings; as pardon through his blood, juſtification in his righteouſneſs imputed, their ſtrength and comfort through life, their guide unto death, and their portion for ever and ever. And as they are God's adopted ſons, ſo God ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts: obſerve, the Spirit was not ſent to make ſons of them, but becauſe they were ſons, God ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, that they might know and plead their privilege, in calling God their Father. Peter knew Jeſus Chriſt, both in his perſon and offices, and he dearly loved him; as may be ſeen from his anſwer to him, in John xxi. 17. where he ſpeaks to him, as the ſearcher of hearts, *Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* And, laſtly, he was an apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, as may be ſeen from his own declaration: and he preached the goſpel of Chriſt, not only to the Jews, but alſo to the Gentiles; and is the firſt apoſtle that did preach the goſpel to the Gentiles; and his miniſtry was made

ſucceſs-

ſucceſsful; for we read of three thouſand at one time being pricked to the heart under him; and at another time, the Holy Ghoſt fell on all thoſe that heard the word: ſo that the work of the Lord proſpered in his hands.

But to proceed to the ſecond particular; What are we to underſtand here by the *kingdom of heaven?*

By the kingdom of heaven is meant the goſpel diſpenſation, which came down from heaven, and is made known to the church of God; and is made known to them, not in word only, but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance; not to the prophets, and apoſtles, and miniſters, their ſucceſſors only, but by them to the whole church, that they have preached the goſpel unto, with the Holy Ghoſt ſent down from heaven: and as it comes from heaven, ſo it ſpeaks of heavenly things; ſuch as the ſaints future reſt and enjoyment; the ſecurity of it, and of them to it; and as corruption cannot inherit incorruption, ſo they are begotten again, to a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reſerved in heaven for all thoſe who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto ſalvation: it diſplays the riches of the grace of God, in the recovering of loſt ſinners from the ruinous ſtate and ſituation of their fall in Adam, by the obedience and death of Jeſus Chriſt in the fleſh, and the operations of the Spirit of God quickening them, and making them ſpiritually alive; working that faith in them

which appropriates the divine promiſes and bleſſings: it ſubdues the enmity of corrupt nature, expoſes the latent ſins of the heart, and the depth of iniquity which before had been undiſcovered; ſo that, from an experimental acquaintance with themſelves, the depraved condition ſin has reduced them to, they confeſs that ſoul humbling truth, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked:* and the more they are enlightened by the Spirit, the more they abhor themſelves; it brings them to ſee the ruinous end of the way they had choſe; and however it ſeemed right unto them, the end thereof was unavoidable death. They now ſee the ignorance that was in them, through the blindneſs of their hearts, which the god of this world had blinded; and the prejudice he had raiſed in them againſt the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; ſetting him forth as an hard man, reaping where he had not ſown, and gathering where he had not ſtrawed; ſetting forth his pedigree, as being only a carpenter's ſon; and as to his mother, ſhe was only called Mary; no title of diſtinction was given to her; and as to his brothers and ſiſters, we know them all, it is a poor mean family.—They ſee into the inordinate attachment that was raiſed in them to this world; and the craft of Satan, in working upon their corrupt inclinations the abſolute neceſſity of it, in order to conduct themſelves with propriety through life; filling them with falſe hopes of heaven, and perſuading them to take up with morality, and reſt in religious duties, as faſting twice in the week, and giving tithes of all they poſſeſs; and to look round, and they may ſee many folks

worſe

worſe than themſelves. Thus the Spirit of God diſcovers to them the cheat Satan was putting upon them; and ſuch acknowledge themſelves as monuments of diſcriminating grace, in being as brands plucked from the fire. The ſame Spirit teaches them, that they may know the hope which God calls them to, which is the hope of the goſpel, and conſiſts not in meats and drinks, &c. but righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt:—ſpeaks of the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, as God-man; his office as the Mediator, and as Prophet, Prieſt, and King; his incarnation and birth, his life and miracles, his doctrine and obedience, his ſufferings and death, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, his ſeſſion at God's right hand, his interceſſion and ſecond coming to judgment; with all the bleſſed truths which the goſpel reports: as redemption, peace, reconciliation, and pardon through his blood, according to the riches of his grace; juſtification in his righteouſneſs imputed; ſalvation and eternal life through him.

And as the goſpel ſpeaks of heavenly things, ſo it makes men heavenly minded: when it comes with power, in the Holy Ghoſt, and in much aſſurance, they are renewed in the ſpirit of their minds, ſhod with the preparation of the goſpel of peace, and walk worthy the vocation wherewith they are called: their converſation is as becomes the goſpel; a heavenly converſation, about heavenly things, where moth and ruſt cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and ſteal: they love to talk of all the wondrous works of God, and to glory in his holy name.

And as it makes them heavenly minded, ſo it makes known to them their right to heaven: and though ſome think that the believer's title to glory is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, imputed to them by faith; yet I conceive their title is of more ancient date: and though none get to glory, but on account of that righteouſneſs imputed, yet I conceive their title is on account of the relation that ſubſiſts between God and them by adoption: and I think the apoſtle beautifully ſets forth this relation, in Rom. viii. 16, 17. *The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirits, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Chriſt.* Now, we were predeſtinated to the adoption of ſons; and becauſe thus predeſtinated, or fore-appointed, God gives us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; *viz.* we know him in an eſpecial manner, according to divine revelation, our Father and Friend from eternity. This inheritance was provided for them before the foundations of the world were laid: God has been their refuge in all generations; and Chriſt is not aſhamed to call them brethren; a more exalted honour, than to boaſt of the blood of nobles running in our veins, or being clothed with imperial purple.

And as it ſhews our right, ſo it alſo ſhews our meetneſs for it; which conſiſts in what is done for us, and in what is done in us: ſuch as being redeemed from all our iniquities, and our perſons juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt; and being juſtified freely by grace, by faith we have peace with God: mind, brethren, we are not

not juſtified by faith, as ſome ſay, but freely by grace, and by faith enjoy peace with God, have acceſs to him, and enjoy communion with him: their path is the path of the juſt, which ſhines more and more unto the perfect day: it is a pleaſant path; they have the Spirit of the Lord for their guide, and God for their companion: and as the way is pleaſant, ſo the end is equally as deſirable. Look, my friends, at the characters thus beloved; take notice of them, and note them well; *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.* He has all the promiſes his own; he leans upon his beloved through the wilderneſs; and all things are working for his good: he can place unbounded confidence in his Father; and though he walks through the valley of the ſhadow of death, he fears no evil; for his Father has given the word, and on that he relies, that he ſhall receive the end of his faith, the ſalvation of his ſoul: and he gives thanks to his Father, who hath made him meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with the ſaints in light. If ſuch the firſt fruits, what muſt the harveſt be, where *light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart?*

We now come to the third general head, which is to enquire what is meant by the *keys* of the kingdom of heaven?

And, firſt, the key of divine knowledge of the doctrines of the goſpel, and abilities to open and explain the goſpel truths, and a commiſſion from Chriſt to make uſe of them; as the doctrine of the Trinity, ſince John tells us, that *there are three that bear record*

in

in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt: and theſe three are one. As for the word *perſon*, that is uſed in Scripture both of the Father and the Son; the Son is ſaid to be the expreſs image of his perſon; that is, of the perſon of God the Father: and the Son muſt be a perſon too, or he would not be the expreſs image of his Father's perſon. Beſides, the word is uſed of him alſo; for we read of *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, or in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt. This doctrine is the foundation of revelation; and, in my opinion, enters into every truth of the goſpel. The form of the adminiſtration of baptiſm, preſcribed by our Lord, was to baptize in the name of *the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt*: and this is ſuch a teſtimony of a Trinity of perſons in Unity, that the Antitrinitarians are not able to deſtroy; and a proof of the divinity of each perſon, and of the equality of each perſon; ſince it is ordered to be adminiſtered equally in the name of the one as in the name of the other: and theſe are equally and truly God.

The eternal generation of Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of God, is thought, by ſome, not to be founded on divine revelation; but John tells us, *That in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Now this, *in the beginning*, muſt be before time took place; and therefore may be read, *From eternity was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Beſides, if Jeſus Chriſt is allowed to be God, then he muſt be without variableneſs, or ſhadow of turning, from everlaſting to everlaſting the ſame. And we underſtand that prayer

is

is ſometimes made to God the Father: *For this cauſe*, ſays the apoſtle, *I bow my knee unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt:* ſometimes to Chriſt; as Stephen, *Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit*; and the thief on the croſs, *Lord, remember me.* Now, if Chriſt be not God, theſe men were idolaters. Sometimes prayer is directed to the third perſon; as, *The Lord the Spirit direct your hearts into the love of God the Father, and into the patient waiting for Chriſt.* And the apoſtle's benediction upon the church at Corinth was, *The grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghoſt, be with you all.*

Another goſpel truth given them is, the everlaſting love of theſe three perſons to the elect: the love of the Father, in chooſing them in Chriſt; the love of the Son, in becoming their Surety; and the love of the Holy Ghoſt, in applying grace unto them, being their Comforter and Sealer; and all this love, not for works of righteouſneſs which they had done; for it was towards their perſons before they were capacitated to perform any; as may be ſeen in Jacob *. And God ſays to his people, *I have loved you with an everlaſting love:* and the fruits of this love may be ſeen, in the eternal, perſonal, and particular election of them to grace and glory. That there is ſuch a people as God's elect, is certain, who were choſen from the beginning to ſalvation: and it is not poſſible they ſhould be deceived, even by thoſe impoſtors who do great ſigns and wonders. It is an important article of our moſt holy faith, the purpoſe of God according to election: what a ſoul raviſhing thought

* Rom. ix. 11.

muſt it be, to have dwelt upon the heart of a loving God before the foundation of the world? How deſervedly ſhall their meditation of him be ſweet, whoſe precious thoughts towards them are ancient as eternity itſelf? If in God's book *all our members are written, which in continuance were faſhioned, when as yet there were none of them*; much more are all the ſaints the *members of Chriſt's body, of his fleſh, and of his bones*, written, without exception, in the fair book of life. Nor can it be ſaid, that God hath choſen us becauſe we were holy, and according to our works: electing love is the root, theſe the flowers; electing love is the foundation, theſe the ſuperſtructure; electing love is the fountain, theſe are the ſtreams that iſſue from it. How deſervedly, therefore, they love God, who without deſerving were loved thus by him? As many as are ordained to eternal life ſhall believe; nor ſhall their ſalvation be overthrown: *for God's foundation ſtands ſure, having this ſeal, The Lord knows them that are his. And whom he did foreknow, them he alſo did predeſtinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son: moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called; and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified.*

The covenant of grace, is another intereſting goſpel truth to the church, made between the eternal Three, when there were none in being but themſelves, and is called an everlaſting covenant; in which grace was given the elect in Chriſt, by God, who cannot lie, before the world began; and the purport of it may be ſeen in Jeremiah xxxii. 38, 39, 40. It is ordered in all things and ſure; God will not break it,

and

and men cannot; *for though the mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be removed, yet ſhall not the covenant of grace be removed, ſaith the Lord.*

Original ſin, is another goſpel truth given to them for the church; where we find the guilt of Adam's ſin being imputed to all his poſterity; and is the cauſe of that proneneſs to ſin from the womb, and the outbreakings of it in all ranks and orders of men amongſt us; and ſhews the abſolute neceſſity of redemption by Chriſt: and though all Adam's poſterity are not redeemed by Chriſt; for thoſe that are redeemed by him, are ſaid to be redeemed from among men, out of every kindred, and tongue, people, and nation; they are thoſe which his Father gave him, and he laid down his life for, *viz.* in their room and ſtead; they are the children of God ſcattered abroad; they are that *general aſſembly and church of the firſt-born, whoſe names are written in heaven.*

Another doctrine of the goſpel, is juſtification by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed; this is not a time act with God, but conceived in the divine mind from eternity, and pronounced in the conſcience of a believer, when the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is revealed to him, and received by him; and will be publicly announced in the ſolemn audit; when *in the Lord all the ſeed of Iſrael ſhall be juſtified, and ſhall glory:* and pardon, peace, and reconciliation by the blood of Chriſt, regeneration, effectual calling, converſion, and ſanctification by the Spirit, power, and grace of God, without which there is no entrance into the kingdom of heaven: and that theſe things are not of man, nor by the will of man, is clear from the teſti-

mony of Zechariah, iv. 6. *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* And our bleſſed Lord himſelf teſtifies the ſame truth, that ſuch were *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God:* and theſe things are no more propoſed to dead ſinners, than the wind is, to blow upon their bodies; ſo that we may ſafely draw the concluſion with Paul, that *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy.*

And, laſtly, the ſaints perſeverance, is another goſpel truth, given for the comfort of the church; when all that are choſen of the Father, redeemed by Chriſt, and ſanctified by the Spirit, ſhall perſevere to the end; being ſecured in the everlaſting covenant, united to Chriſt, and built on him, the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt them; for they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto ſalvation; and they ſhall never periſh, nor ſhall any pluck them out of the hands of Chriſt: as well may they attempt to pluck an eye, or tear a limb, from the glorified humanity of Jeſus Chriſt; for they are kept as the apple of his eye, and are the members of his body, of his fleſh, and of his bones.

But, in the ſecond place, there is the key of experience. When the people of God are called by grace, they are brought to ſee the beauty and excellency of the goſpel plan, in the foregoing truths; and highly to prize and value them, from a feeling ſenſe of the abſolute neceſſity of them; to withſtand all the onſets of Satan, to fight the good fight of faith, to war a good warfare, and to lay hold on eternal

nal life; and all unintereſted in them are, in Scripture reckoning, pronounced guilty; for whom no means are provided to acquit them at the bar of God: and they ſee that every ſcheme of natural religion only leaves the polluted offſpring of fallen Adam ſtill weltering in their blood; rebels under the original attainder; inſolvent debtors in the infernal priſon; ſinners in the hand of a juſt God; unranſomed, unforgiven, unchanged, bewildered, comfortleſs, accurſed for ever: and all the reaſoning in the world, without grace from on high, will only be found like a lamp to a lame man; may ſhew him the way, but cannot enable him to take one ſtep in it. That, bleſſed be God, is only the province of the goſpel plan; which enlargeth the heart, and is light to our paths, health to the navel, and marrow to the bones; they enter heartily into the ſpirit of it; experience its ſweets, as refreſhing cordials to their drooping minds; and when they invite thoſe who fear God, to come unto them, to tell what the Lord has done for their ſouls, they talk of all his wondrous works, and glory in his holy name.

Thirdly, God gives his miniſters gifts and abilities to unlock the truths of the Bible. When the minds of his people are at any time perplexed about any portion of divine revelation, God either reveals it to them in a ſupernatural way, or he inclines them to hear ſome of his miniſters, to whom he directs, in a ſupernatural way to ſuch a portion: or he ſends his miniſters to them. An inſtance of the latter we have in a great man, who was returning from worſhip; and as he was ſitting in his chariot, he read Eſaias

the

the prophet: now, mark, *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot, and Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip, that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus:* and the result of the matter was, *he went on his way rejoicing* *. And I believe a similar case was the cause which led me to send this Sermon into the world. Happy are they who are made the honoured instruments of good to God's church.

Now Peter was the first that made use of these keys of evangelical knowledge to the Jews †: and he was the first that used these keys to the Gentiles ‡; and when the other apostles received an enlarged commission, to preach the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then they all alike had these keys; as appears from Matth. xviii. 18. so that this does not shew Peter to be the primate and metropolitan of the Christian empire: nor did he lord any dominion over the apostles; nor did Christ

* Acts viii. 27, &c. † Acts ii. 14, &c.

‡ Acts x. and also chap. xv. 7th and 14th verses.

allow

allow it; nor is it his will, that the miniſters of his word ſhould lord it over his heritage: nor is Peter the door-keeper of heaven, nor has his pretended ſucceſſor the keys of hell and death; the King of ſaints, alone, has them; he opens, and no man ſhuts, he ſhuts, and no man opens: but theſe keys are of the goſpel diſpenſation; and as keys are the enſigns of treaſurers and ſtewards, ſuch the miniſters of the goſpel are; they have the rich treaſure of the word put into their earthen veſſels, to open and lay before others, as good ſtewards of the myſteries and manifold grace of God; and they have the keys of them: ſo that theſe words have nothing to do with church power and government in Peter; nor in that arch-heretic, the pope, nor any other man, or ſet of men whatever; and they are not bought, nor ſtolen, but given by Chriſt.

Fourthly, and laſtly, *Whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven, and whatſoever thou ſhalt looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven.* This is not to be underſtood of binding or looſing men's ſins, but refers to thoſe doctrines and practices which the obſervance of were commanded under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, and no longer to be noticed under the goſpel diſpenſation; and thoſe things which, under the Moſaic law, were pronounced unlawful and unclean, were, under the goſpel, not to be called common or unclean; ſo that the apoſtles were empowered with authority, and directed by the Holy Spirit, that whatever they bound, that is, declared to be forbidden, or unlawful, ſhould be ſo; and that whatever they looſed, that is, declared to be lawful and free,

free, ſhould be ſo: and, accordingly, they bound ſome things which before were looſed, and looſed ſome things which before were bound. As, for inſtance, they bound, that is, prohibited, or declared unlawful, the doctrine of circumciſion, which before, and until the death of Chriſt, was enjoined the natural ſeed of Abraham; but that, and all ceremonies, being aboliſhed by the death of Chriſt, they declared it to be nothing, and of no avail, yea, hurtful and pernicious; for whoever was circumciſed, Chriſt profited him nothing; and that he was a debtor to do the whole law; and that the believing Gentiles were not to be troubled with it; that it was a yoke not fit to be put upon their necks, which they and their Fathers were not able to bear *: *Stand faſt in the liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul ſay unto you, That if ye be circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing; for I teſtify again to every man that is circumciſed, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. For in Jeſus Chriſt, neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but faith, which worketh by love*; viz. to thoſe choſen in Jeſus Chriſt, and under the diſpenſation of the goſpel of Chriſt, whether Jews or Gentiles, *&c.* circumciſion availeth not any thing, but faith, which is of the operation of the Holy Ghoſt; and is emphatically ſtiled, *the faith of God's elect*, which worketh by love; love to God, love to his word, love to his ordinances, and love to his people: therefore, this doctrine was to be diſcontinued, as uſeleſs and unprofitable; and though ſome

* Gal. v.

of

of the Jews and Judaizing teachers, were very tenacious for its continuance; yet Peter reaſons with them, and ſays, *God, which knoweth the hearts, bear the Gentiles witneſs, giving them the Holy Ghoſt, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the necks of the diſciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear; but we believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, we ſhall be ſaved even as they**.

Secondly, They bound, or forbid, the obſervance of days, months, times, and years; the keeping of holy days, new moons, and Sabbaths; which had been uſed in the Jewiſh church for ages paſt: ſuch as the firſt day in the new year, and of every month, the day of atonement, the feaſts of the paſſover, pentecoſt, and tabernacles, the Jubilee year, the Sabbatical year, and ſeventh day Sabbath; for reſpecting ſuch things the apoſtle reaſons, *But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye deſire again to be in bondage? Ye obſerve days, and months, and times, and years; let no man, therefore, judge you in meat and drink, or in reſpect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a ſhadow of things to come, but the body is of Chriſt* †.

Thirdly, They looſed, or declared lawful and free, both civil and religious converſation between Jews and Gentiles; whereas, before, the Jews had no

* Acts xv. 8—12. † Col. ii. 16, 17.

dealings with the Gentiles, nor would they enter into their houſes, or keep company with them; they would not hold any converſation with them; they would neither eat nor drink with them: but now that partition wall was broken down, the diſtinction was not to be known under the goſpel diſpenſation; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion, Barbarian or Scythian, bond nor free; but Chriſt is all, and in all: and no man henceforth ſhould be called common or unclean; for, in the church of Chriſt, there is no diſtinction of either Jew or Gentile; for Peter obſerves, in Acts x. 28. when ſpeaking to Cornelius, *Ye know, how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath ſhewed me, that I ſhould not call any man common or unclean.* And when Peter was come up to Jeruſalem, they that were of the circumciſion contended with him, ſaying, *Thou wenteſt in to men uncircumciſed, and didſt eat with them.* But after Peter had aſſigned his reaſon, the viſion he had, and alſo every particular of it, and the bleſſed effects of his preaching to the Gentiles; when the Jews heard theſe things, they held their peace, and glorified God, ſaying, *Then hath God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life:* and they were declared all one in Chriſt Jeſus: *For if they are Chriſt's, then they are Abraham's ſeed, and heirs according to promiſe.*

Laſtly, They looſed, or declared lawful, the eating of any ſort of food, without diſtinction, even that which was before counted common and unclean; being

ing perſuaded by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that *not that which goeth into the mouth, defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.* They declared there was nothing unclean of itſelf, and that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; nor does it lie in outward obſervances; for that every creature of God is good, and fit for food, and not to be refuſed on a religious account, if ſo be it be received with thankſgiving: and theſe things now being by them bound or looſed, declared unlawful or lawful, are fully confirmed ſo by God's authority.

Thus, my brethren, I have gone through what I propoſed from the text. It remains that I aſk, Have you been bleſſed with an experimental acquaintance of any part of Peter's character? You have heard it ſet forth, can you read yours there? If ſo, you are of the true circumciſion, who worſhip God in the Spirit, rejoice in Chriſt Jeſus, and have no confidence in the fleſh: you have fully embraced the glorious plan of ſalvation, in all its doctrinal truths, from a feeling ſenſe of the abſolute neceſſity of them, for your preſent ſafety, and future happineſs: here you behold that bleſſed union, which ſubſiſted between the Lord Jeſus Chriſt and his people; a union that took place before they were born into the world of grace; yea, before they were born into the world of nature: before they were born, did I ſay? nay, it is a union ancient as eternity itſelf; for grace was given them in Chriſt Jeſus before the world began. If, then, grace was given them, choſen

in Chriſt Jeſus, before the world began, with him they were crucified, with him they died, with him they deſcended into the grave; when he aroſe from the dead, they alſo did ariſe; when he aſcended on high, they alſo aſcended, and ſat down with him in heavenly places. The more theſe bleſſed truths are unlocked, the more they rejoice that are intereſted in them; and cry, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom, and knowledge of God!* And as they are all founded on the ſovereign pleaſure of God; ſo they report peace on earth, and good-will towards men.

May God bleſs his word, and to his name be everlaſting praiſe. Amen.

F I N I S.

N. B. The Reader is deſired to correct with his pen, the following blunder that eſcaped in the hurry of printing; page 14. line 6. for, *on account of that righteouſneſs*, read, *in that righteouſneſs*.

BRITISH 29NO72 MUSEUM

A

LIST

OF THE

SUBSCRIBERS

TO THIS

PUBLICATION.

Mr. Holloway, Old-ſtreet-road, 6 Copies
Mr. Forman, Great Saffron-hill, ditto
Mr. Jackſon, ditto, ditto
Mr. Dixon, ditto
Mr. Hotchings, Shoreditch, ditto
Mr. Weſt, Church-ſtreet, St. Luke, ditto
Mr. Pleſter, Faſhion-ſtreet, Spitalfields, ditto
Mr. Hart, Newcaſtle-ſtreet, Fleet-market, ditto
Mr. Everit, City-road, ditto
Mr. Nichols, Tabernacle-ſquare, ditto
Mr. Bradſhaw, Bunhill-row, ditto
Mr. Allen, No. 53, Shoredith, ditto
Mr. Savage, Hoxton-ſquare, ditto
Mr. Jonathan Spring, Brigg, Lincolnſhire, 84 Copies
Mr. Edward Sergeant, Minories, 6 Copies
Mr. William Palmer, Preſcot-ſtreet, Goodman's-fields
6 Copies
Mr. P. ditto

Mr. L. 6 Copies
Mr. Moſs, ditto
Mr. Philpot, ditto
Mr. Eland, Gwyn's-buildings, Goſwell-ſtreet, ditto
Mr. John Jaques, Tabernacle-place, 3 Copies
Mr. Wincott, Chiſwell-ſtreet, ditto
Mr. Hill, Tower, 2 Copies
Mr. M. ditto
Mr. H. ditto
Mr. S. ditto
Mr. Hockley, 6 Copies
Mrs. Brown, Shoreditch, 2 Copies
Mr. Beale, Steward-ſtreet, Spitalfields, 6 Copies
Mr. C. ditto
Mr. Myddleton, Hoxton, 5 Copies
J. Chalmers, Printer, Old-ſtreet, 12 Copies.

Lately Publiſhed, by the ſame Author,

The Believer's Conflict, and Saint's Coronation, 6d.

BRITISH
29NO72
MUSEUM